

Here's looking at you, kid

Manuel Palazón Blasco

# accidental

“Movies made under the studio system were accumulations of accidents, and *Casablanca* was no exception. (...) A classic movie is the biggest accident of all. A thousand things have to fit together.”<sup>1</sup>

“It was an accident, of course, that *Casablanca* blended a theme and half a dozen actors, an old song and a script full of cynical lines and moral certainty, into 102 minutes that have settled into the American psyche. But every movie is a creature built from accidents and blind choices –a mechanical monster constructed of camera angles, chemistry between actors, too little money or too much, and a thousand unintended moments.”<sup>2</sup>

“If history is viewed as a series of accidents that become fact, then the history of Warner Bros. Production No. 410 is a series of lucky accidents that brought together the perfect script, director and stars to create the definitive romantic thriller.”<sup>3</sup>

“If any Hollywood movie exemplifies the ‘genius of the system,’ it is surely *Casablanca* – a film whose success was founded on almost as many types of skill as varieties of luck.”<sup>4</sup>

Going over the making-  
of  
of the film  
they all seem to agree: *Casablanca* was  
“a mosaic of fortune – good  
and bad.”<sup>5</sup>  
“But it all worked. There’s a lot of serendipity here.”<sup>6</sup> And  
it ended up being “the happiest  
of happy accidents”<sup>7</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Harmetz (1992 B: 267 – 268).

<sup>2</sup> Harmetz (1992 A: 6).

<sup>3</sup> Miller (1992: 10).

<sup>4</sup> Hoberman (1992: 269).

<sup>5</sup> Harmetz (1992 A: 7).

<sup>6</sup> Julius Epstein. En Lebo (1992: 13).

<sup>7</sup> Film critic Andrew Harris, quoted in Harmetz (1992 A: 75).

For instance, MGM wouldn't buy the play,  
they thought 5,000 dollars was too much<sup>8</sup>,  
but if they had,  
well,  
they might have produced some Metro-Goldwin-Merde<sup>9</sup>,  
a Technicolor  
turd.

For instance, Warner Brothers scheduled it  
first  
as a *B* movie, I want you guys to make this one fast  
and cheap.<sup>10</sup>

For instance,  
composer Max Steiner "hated"<sup>11</sup> 'As Time Goes By',  
and hadn't Ingrid Bergman already had her hair cut short  
to interpret María in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*  
the scenes around the song might have been reshot<sup>12</sup>,  
and Ilsa would have hummed for Sam a different tune.

For instance, what  
if Ronald Reagan and Ann Sheridan had played the parts  
of Rick  
and Ilsa  
instead?<sup>13</sup>

of course, in our script a lot of things have been accidental:  
my believing I was a new  
widow,  
(which marked me as available

---

<sup>8</sup> Harmetz (1992 A: 8).

<sup>9</sup> Dorothy Parker, *Not Much Fun: The Lost Poems of Dorothy Parker*.

<sup>10</sup> Brown (1992: 9).

<sup>11</sup> Producer Hal Wallis, quoted in Lebo (1992: 180).

<sup>12</sup> Harmetz (1992 A: 7).

<sup>13</sup> "The first publicity on *Casablanca* was planted in the *Hollywood Reporter* on January 5, 1942: 'Ann Sheridan and Ronald Reagan co-star for the third time in Warner's *Casablanca*, with Dennis Morgan also coming in for top billing.' Harmetz (1992 A: 72 – 73).

again, and brought out, nature's a naughty bitch, the heat,  
I would ramble the streets of Paris like a doe in season),  
my husband's unexpected  
secondcoming  
(and sick, too, so I had to nurse him back into his heroic role),  
our following the “refugee trail” (“Paris  
to Marseilles,  
across the Mediterranean to Oran,  
then by train,  
or auto,  
or foot,  
across the rim of Africa  
to Casablanca”),  
and coming into Rick's Café and bitter  
(after)life  
(but there were only two “gin joints” in town,  
and,  
as the title of the play advertised  
and Captain Renault actually said in the picture,  
“everybody comes to Rick's”)

now “brush up your Shakespeare”, *à la* Cole Porter, let  
the upstart crow from Stratford-upon-Avon's idiots (aren't we  
all?)  
snore their lines  
on cue,  
comment, like an off-stage discordant chorus,  
aside,  
on our actions,  
indeed, “never  
Fortune  
has play'd a subtler game”<sup>14</sup>,  
and sure, we can't (how  
could  
we?)  
“outrun the heavens”<sup>15</sup>,

---

<sup>14</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, V, IV, 112 – 113.

<sup>15</sup> William Shakespeare, *Segunda Parte de El rey Enrique VI*, V, II, 73.

for “ourselves  
we  
do  
not  
owe”<sup>16</sup>

but the Bard’s “spirits” contradict each other,  
and this one bragged that “men  
at some time  
are masters of their fates...”,  
and yeah, Cassius was right as well, “the fault, dear [Richard],  
is not in our stars,  
but in ourselves”<sup>17</sup>,  
that we fucked (that we fucked  
up)

for  
we  
willed  
it  
all,  
didn’t  
we,  
our Paris affair,  
and our scene upstairs, in your apartment over the Café  
(during the soft dissolve in Howard Koch’s  
draft,  
which the Hollywood censors erased)

(and  
yeah,  
we are,  
or used to be,  
“terrible  
people”,

---

<sup>16</sup> William Shakespeare, *Noche de reyes*, I, V, 314.

<sup>17</sup> William Shakespeare, *Julio César*, I, II, 138 – 140.

even though someone wrote that truth too  
off  
the script),  
and also the righteous,  
self-sacrificing endings we devised,  
first, in Paris, I stood you up at the Gare de Lyon, ditched  
you,  
and then you did “the thinking for both of us” in Casablanca,  
sent me  
off  
on that plane to Lisbon  
and America  
and married purgatory

but then the word “accidental” comes from *ad cadere*,  
falling,  
and perhaps it was so in that first we stumbled  
onto love and blissful  
fornication  
and then out of allthatjazz

“Here’s looking at you, kid.”

\*\*\*\*\*

they were, this first time, in Rick’s apartment in Paris,  
he had opened a bottle of champagne, served  
two glasses,  
asked her who are you  
really,  
and what were you before, she  
said, we said  
no questions,  
here’s looking at you, kid,  
he said  
then,  
and they drank

\*\*\*\*\*

now they are in that “small café in the Montmartre”,  
*La Belle Aurore*, Sam  
is playing *As Time Goes By*,  
Rick gets three glasses, a bottle of champagne,  
walks over to the piano beach,  
where Ilsa has been  
stranded,  
pours,  
exchanges with Sam a few bitter wisecracks about the  
oncoming nazi occupation,  
looks at Ilsa,  
says,  
Here’s looking at you, kid,  
a loudspeaker, in the street,  
growls in German, Ilsa,  
“very distraught”,  
nags him,  
kissmekissmeasifitwerethelasttime

\*\*\*\*\*

it's her second time up the stairs,  
in Rick's room above his saloon,  
they have made up (they have made  
out),  
“there is a bottle of champagne on the table  
and two half-filled glasses”,  
Rick has been watching “the revolving beacon light at the  
airport from his window”, Ilsa  
tells her dubious story,  
says oh I don't know what's right any longer says  
you'll have to think for both of us for all of us,  
Rick says, all right I will, Here's  
looking  
at you,  
kid

\*\*\*\*\*

they are at the airport, the script gets Laszlo  
off  
a moment,  
so they can have this little scene  
apart,  
this  
sad  
aside,  
but what about us,  
we'll always have Paris, blah  
blah  
blah,  
Here's  
looking  
at you,  
kid

\*\*\*\*\*

here's looking at you, it is  
some old pub talk, also poker  
slang  
(*la Bergman was learning the game on the set,  
played with her hairdresser and her English coach, hairpins  
as chips,*  
Bogart found it funny, taught her some hampa voc,  
used the line  
first  
that afternoon of July 3,  
they were back at *La Belle Aurore*  
“for some retakes”,  
the Epsteins liked it)

\*\*\*\*\*

here's looking at you, kid,  
tough guys, of course, can't say a plain  
iloveyou,  
their male-  
ness  
might recoil,  
but this silly toast  
would do  
instead,  
and does  
indeed

\*\*\*\*\*

the endearing salutation serves, see?, as a token, here, of their  
foreplay,  
here, of the tired,  
sweet  
aftermath

\*\*\*\*\*

here's looking at you,  
*kid*,  
says Rick,  
and puts on, with that, his sugardaddy  
act,  
dons  
the mask  
(the hat)  
of papa

\*\*\*\*\*

the fact that the last time Rick says here's looking at you *kid*,  
at the Casablanca airport,  
there's no champagne,  
no glasses,  
makes  
it  
a dry  
toast,  
signalling bad luck  
and failure

\*\*\*\*\*

here's looking at *you*, kid, it is Rick's clumsy,  
anxious  
way  
of trying to appropriate Ilsa (his rights over her were,  
alas,  
questionable)

\*\*\*\*\*

here's *looking*

at you,  
kid,

Rick is trying to *record* Ilsa in his memory,  
so that he will still be able to blubber,  
on the smelly beach of his drunken stupors, I  
remember  
everything,  
iremembereverything

## what about the play

and what about  
the play,  
for we two were meant  
first  
to fret  
and strut  
upon a stage

our “year-long affair” started in 1934, some silly  
spring-  
break, well  
before the war,  
no epic scope about it

you had been, Rick, when I met you back in Paris,  
a well-heeled lawyer, married  
to the daughter of some mogul,  
and a father of two children,  
and I knew all about it, you told me while we were making  
out  
that first time,  
hiding on the roof of that hotel,  
after the party, we  
had been dancing,  
I was  
a kept  
dame,  
my ridiculous *uncle* (you would characterize him  
as “that perfumed thing that called itself  
a man”)  
paid for the “beauty  
and chic”  
which you fancied then,

but *that part* I hadn't told you, how  
could I?,  
and when you saw us walking into *La Belle Aurore* you broke  
down

it had been, I say in the play, of our story  
so far,  
up to my coming with Victor into that "tawdry café" in  
Casablanca  
and spending the night upstairs in your apartment,  
and saying to each other, in the morning, all those ugly things,  
it had been, I say, "a fairy tale  
with a nasty ending",  
but the definition stands, applies  
as well  
to the whole affair,  
just look at you, look  
at me, we've made  
a mess  
of it,  
haven't we

## in black-and-white

\*\*\*\*\*

what does black-and-white  
do  
to a movie?  
it fixes  
it  
off  
reality,  
it turns it into a *story*, into something made  
*up*,  
into an artifact which, because it marks itself as make-  
believe,  
can better tell us  
what  
we  
are,  
all the things  
we've  
lost

\*\*\*\*\*

*Casablanca* could only be shot (can only be  
seen)  
in black-and-white

producer Hal Wallis was “anxious to get real blacks  
and whites  
with the walls and the background in shadow,  
and dim,  
sketchy  
lighting”<sup>18</sup>,

---

<sup>18</sup> Lebo (1992: 142).

and harassed Arthur Edeson,  
“the Little Napoleon” of Warner Brothers, “kind of a weak  
sister”,  
who wept,  
but complied<sup>19</sup>, did  
a good job, which won him an Oscar nomination,  
his third

\*\*\*\*\*

television mogul Ted Turner bought Warner Bro’s  
pre-1950  
films,  
he had a tacky dream, to colorize  
all those oldies,  
premiere them on his TV channel,  
then pimp  
them  
out  
for syndication and home-video release,  
his painted  
lot  
lizards

this idiotic Ceasar paraded *Casablanca*  
thus made  
up  
on his TBS SuperStation on November 9, 1988<sup>20</sup>,  
like another Cleopatra “i’ the posture of a whore”<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Francis Scheid, editor de sonido. Citado en Harmetz (1992: 136).

<sup>20</sup> Miller (1992: 186).

<sup>21</sup> William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act V, Scene II, 220.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ilsa: ...*Let's see, the last time we met...*  
Rick: *It was 'La Belle Aurore'.*  
Ilsa: *How nice. You remembered. But of course, that was the day the Germans marched into Paris.*  
Rick: *Not an easy day to forget.*  
Ilsa: *No.*  
Rick: *I remember every detail. The Germans wore gray, you wore blue.*  
Ilsa: *Yes. I put that dress away. When the Germans march out, I'll wear it again.*

(and still the blue Ilsa wore at the *La Belle Aurore* scene  
ought to stand out in a movie which could only be shot  
in black-and-white,  
so I would tamper with the film, clumsily  
color  
her dress  
at the Paris café  
in the flash-  
back  
scenes)

## we'll always have what

we'll always have Paris, you said, and  
yet,  
all we could bank on, and swear  
by,  
was what the flashback scenes told, growing  
out of your cigarette smoke,  
Sam's astimegoesby being drowned first in *La Marseillaise* (no  
lyrics  
this time,  
thankgod)  
as you drive us along the boulevard in a convertible, with the  
top  
rolled  
down,  
leaving the *Arc de Triomphe* behind,  
the March dissolving into some mellow tune when we reach  
the countryside,  
“the car, of course, was  
stagebound,  
the environs of Paris a back projection”,  
and “the spring breeze” ruffling our hair “provided by an off-  
camera fan”<sup>22</sup>,  
now we’re on a boat excursion,  
on the Seine, I  
have this cute woollen French-style cap on,  
you’ve bought some peanuts from the vendor,  
take one out of the packet, throw  
it  
at  
me,  
like I’m some kind of circus seal,

---

<sup>22</sup> Lebo (1992: 140).

and I catch it,  
laugh,  
and all this time we don't say a thing,  
Curtiz dropped the dialogue,  
it is a (stammering) silent film within a talky, made out of two  
short  
dumb  
shows,  
now we are in your apartment, you  
ask  
me,  
who are you really, and-  
what-  
were-  
you-  
before, what did you do and what do you think, huh?,  
and I say, we said no questions,  
and you come up with the here's-  
looking-  
at-  
you-  
kid  
phrase,  
now we're dancing "inside a swank Paris café", now  
it's my apartment,  
now  
we're sitting in a café,  
reading the paper, glossing over the bad news, the Nazi Army  
just outside the city,  
and now we are in *La Belle Aurore*,  
our  
last  
date,  
the *Gare de Lyon* scene I can only guess about

so  
this  
is  
all  
we'll-always-have,  
we don't even know how we met, how  
we played the scenes leading to our first kiss,  
how long it took us to reach what you yankees fans call home  
base,  
but then that happened off the script,  
so it doesn't really count,  
or does it?

## how little we know (how little it matters)

they knew  
“so  
very  
little”  
about each other,  
hadn’t they said ‘no  
questions’?,  
they were already splashing about in their affair,  
dancing in Ilsa’s apartment,  
when she told him that there had been another “man” in her  
life

(but he’s dead, he’s  
dead),  
only  
on their last date,  
at the *La Belle Aurore* café,  
did they learn  
that  
“say”,  
ten years before this, before  
Paris,  
he had been “looking for a job”, and she  
had  
had  
her  
bite  
fixed

that was all, and that  
was  
fine  
with them  
then

but then Ilsa failed to join him at the *Gare de Lyon*,  
had left a note saying Icannotgowithyouoreverseeyouagain  
blah

blah,  
so now,  
in Casablanca,  
in his surly mood,  
Rick can only draw on this shallow well,  
the maybe-  
not-  
thoroughly-  
defunct  
man,  
her orthodontic records

## specimens of kisses in *Casablanca*

Rick and Ilsa swap spit  
and snot (tongue  
fuck)  
several times  
on screen,  
both in the flash-back scenes, in Paris,  
and in Casablanca, in his room upstairs,  
at the *Café Americain*; Victor Laszlo  
only kisses his wife twice, on the cheek,  
apprehensively reaching mormon  
second  
base,  
a fastidious,  
limp,  
telling  
peck

“Walk up a flight. I’ll be expecting you.”<sup>23</sup>

on the stage

in the play,  
sitting at that odd table  
(Strasser frowns, Rinaldo  
leers,  
Victor Laszlo grimaces)  
the vinegary guy who has given his name to this joint in  
Casablanca  
and Mrs. Laszlo  
recall their last time  
together,  
in Paris,  
at *La Belle Aurore*,  
and Rick manages, with a donjuanish trick,  
to slip his apartment key to his old flame

the curtains draw with the café almost empty,  
there’s only Rick, and Sam “the Rabbit”,  
at the piano,  
playing “it” reluctantly for his boss

it’s Act 2, Scene 1, “the next morning”,  
and Rick “comes down from his apartment,  
soon followed by Lois,  
who is dressed in the same clothes she wore the night before”,  
signalling,  
of course,  
her having slept over,  
and they say some bitter things to each other,  
in what the dame calls “a nasty ending”  
to their “fairy tale”<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Rick’s words to Ilsa in the movie.

<sup>24</sup> Willer (1993: 213 – 214).

the studio shopped the play around, to see if it  
would  
do,

Aeneas MacKenzie and Wally Kline were among the first  
writers on the lot to take it apart<sup>25</sup>,  
and warned,  
in their memos,  
of some “highly censorable situations,  
relationships,  
and implications”  
which must be “removed”<sup>26</sup>,  
and one was,  
of course,  
that between-the-acts, off-  
stage scene  
upstairs

---

<sup>25</sup> Wally Kline. In Lebo (1992: 42).

<sup>26</sup> Wally Kline. In Lebo (1992: 42).

## the Code

the Production Code was put together while fingering rosary beads,

among hailmaries,

had the Legion of Decency minding it,

and was captained by Presbyterian elder Will Hays<sup>27</sup>

the Hays Office became a holy fort,

their sanctimonious tight-assed cavalrymen protecting “the institution of marriage

and the home”,

abhorred fornication<sup>28</sup>

and dirt,

motel rooms,

meandmrjones stories (that sort of love must never, never

“be presented

as [...] beautiful”)<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Harmetz (1992: 162).

<sup>28</sup> Harmetz (1992; 39).

<sup>29</sup> Harmetz (1992: 163).

## the May 21 draft

RICK: (...) *[Victor is] in love with People, but I'm in love with you.*

ILSA: [Looks at him with tear-dimmed eyes. In a whisper.]  
*I wish you weren't. I wish I weren't in love with you.* [He takes her in his arms and kisses her. It is a long kiss. When they finally disengage, Ilsa looks up at him. Tenderly.] *We're still terrible people.* [They kiss again.] FADE OUT<sup>30</sup>

oh yes, they were, Ilsa  
and Rick,  
indeed  
“terrible people”,  
and that *fade out* was an invitation, a window  
of cozy opportunities  
which they wouldn’t (how could they?)  
miss

---

<sup>30</sup> From the May 21 draft of the script. In Miller (1993: 121).

## Joe Breen's instructions

Joseph Ignatius Breen, call-me-“Joe”,  
the Production Code Administration chief,  
thought the Hollywood world  
rotten,  
populated with drunkards,  
jews,  
pagans,  
pervs

Breen’s staff examined the May 21st script and found it disturbing,  
suggested “replacing  
the fade on page 135  
with a dissolve,  
and shooting the succeeding scene without any sign of a bed  
or couch,  
or anything whatever suggestive of a sex affair”, “otherwise  
it could not be approved”<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Letter to Warner Brothers dated June 18th, 1942. In Lebo (1992: 105).

## okeyed

the scene was shot on July 27th following the P. C. A. instructions, not a hint

of “a bed  
or couch” in the apartment,  
and a *dissolve*  
instead of the *fade*

thus “corrected”, *Casablanca*  
was able to earn Production Code Certificate of Approval  
8457,

and the Hays Office files summed up the movie’s  
moral downs  
and ups  
with “‘Much Drinking’,  
a little gambling,  
two killings  
and no illicit sex”<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Harmetz (1992: 164):

## inside the *dissolve*

so  
ok,  
he sees now, there had been  
some misunderstanding,  
and they make up, and kiss, and there's  
the *dissolve*,  
and Rick is standing by the half-open French windows,  
a cigarette in his hand,  
watching “the revolving beacon light at the airport  
from his window”, gives Ilsa  
the cue,  
and then?  
and she, sitting on the two-seater sofa (not  
a proper couch),  
will resume her story<sup>33</sup>

yes,  
the *dissolve* seems to have worked, it is  
prophylactic,  
leaves little room for them to do much,  
some clumsy, nervous coitus seems very unlikely,  
just look at them,  
her hairdo untouched, her blouse  
unruffled,  
his hair oiled back,  
not a wrinkle in his white jacket,  
his bow-tie perfectly balanced on his buttoned-up shirt

we know, though, that Ilsa's story-telling has gone on  
unhurriedly,  
there's “a bottle of champagne on the table  
and two half-filled glasses”,

---

<sup>33</sup> From the final script.

and when Rick calls good old Carl up (he  
is downstairs with Victor Laszlo,  
they are hiding from the German police),  
and he finds Ilsa,  
and is told,  
“in a low voice”,  
to “take Miss Lund  
home”,  
we somehow see through the fat man’s spectacles, don’t we?

## Miss Lund

as she enters the café with Victor Laszlo the script introduces her as his “companion”,  
and warns its readers,  
the guys who have to turn it into a movie,  
that she must thereafter be “known  
as Miss Ilsa Lund”,  
thus  
burying  
her current marital status  
under three layers,  
for both the title  
and her maiden name  
label her as unmarried,  
and by marking her off as Laszlo’s “companion”  
one sees Ilsa as a kind of bed-  
and-  
board  
employee

Laszlo himself, obedient  
to the script,  
will then “present” her to Captain Renault, and to all of us,  
as “Miss Ilsa Lund”

Rick has called good old Carl  
up,  
from the balcony railing,  
“at the top of the stairs, the fat waiter sees  
Ilsa”,  
standing inside the apartment, Rick says,  
“in a low voice”,  
“I want you to take *Miss Lund* home”, it is  
on purpose

(deliberately)

(willfully)

that he uses that title, with her daddy's  
surname,

clumsily trying to conceal

(to cancel?)

the fact that she is married to Victor Laszlo, the hero  
downstairs,  
at the bar

the end (The End) is near,  
and Rick “takes the letters of transit out of his pocket”,  
“hands them” to Captain Renault, orders him  
then

to “fill in the names”, to “make it  
even more official”,  
and says “quietly”, “and the names are  
Mr. and Mrs. *Victor Laszlo*”,  
somehow,

by phrasing it like that, he is giving  
away

the bride,

confirming the marriage, saying,  
hey,

this is who you will be from now on, what

# bogus landscape of final scene

“At the airport, the outline of the transport plane is barely visible.”

“Orderly: *East runway. Visibility: one and a half miles. Light ground fog. Depth of fog: approximately 500...*”

*Enter  
Chorus, a glee  
club  
of two,  
assistant director Lee Katz  
& John Beckham, the Props Master, ah  
sure, we  
“fogged  
in  
the set  
not so much to give it an atmosphere  
but because we had to conceal the fact that everything was so  
phony”  
for what-with-the-war-and-all  
all  
location  
shooting  
had been forbidden along the West Coast,  
and you were only allowed to photograph grounded,  
maimed aircrafts (their propellers  
removed),  
hence  
we built the airport hangar on Warner Bros. Stage 1,  
and knocked together, for the so-  
called  
“transport plane”,  
a mockup,  
scaled-  
down  
ship,*

“a pretty bad cutout”,  
a profile  
in  
depth,  
“made out of plywood and maybe some balsa”  
which was supposed “to match” a real one we had “borrowed  
from Lockheed” before,  
and,  
to make the fake aeroplane look bigger, and “give  
it  
a forced perspective”,  
we hired “a bunch of midgets to portray the mechanics”<sup>34</sup>

*Exit*

*Chorus. Enter*

*Ilsa.* It was our final scene, we  
were to say, last night we said,  
but Richard, no,  
no,  
I,  
but  
what  
about  
us,  
we'll-always-have-Paris, here's  
looking  
at  
you,  
kid,  
and all the time a pea soup was muddying the pretend  
airdrome,  
and a crew of Lilliputians crawled around the toy plane  
that would take me away from Casablanca, and off  
*Casablanca*

---

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Harmetz (1992: 105 – 106; 237).

## Ceiling: unlimited

*Orderly: East runway. Visibility: one and a half miles. Light ground fog.  
Depth of fog: approximately 500. Ceiling: unlimited.*

“ceiling:  
unlimited”: so  
the Orderly  
croaked,  
an indifferent forecaster,  
calling the weather expected for the Lisbon plane, yet  
there was a very low roof for my portion in the afterdamp of  
the movie,  
and it would hit it,  
and crash

# the mess of getting out of the car at the airport



“At the airport, the outline of the transport plane is barely visible.”

Orderly: *Hello, radio tower? Lisbon plane taking off in ten minutes. East runway. Visibility: one and a half miles. Light ground fog. Depth of fog: approximately 500. Ceiling: unlimited.*

He hangs up, and crosses to the car that has just pulled up. Renault gets out, closely followed by Rick, hand in pocket, still covering Renault with a gun. Laszlo and Ilsa come from the rear of the car.”<sup>35</sup>

July 17. On Warner Bros.

Stage 1.

the morning was “proceeding smoothly”. Bit player

Jean De Briac

okeyed to the radio tower the visibility conditions for take-off, they did some glass-shots,

and then, just

before lunch,

the business of the arrival of the car at the airport came up.

---

<sup>35</sup> From the Script.

While the orderly reads the report Edeson's camera picks the vehicle through a window,

as it gets to the front of the hangar.

Captain Renault is driving his car,  
with Rick pointing his gun at him from the passenger seat;  
at the back, husband-  
and-

wife. Claude Reins

had to stop the car at a fixed mark; then  
they would all pile out, hit  
their individual spots,  
dish out their lines. It all "required  
a complex set up". It  
flopped. And  
flopped.

"...For one reason or another, each take went awry —Rains missed the car's stop point, passengers exited clumsily, doors were slammed at the wrong moment, or dialogue was garbled..."

Only after "eight

lengthy

takes"

could they get it

right.<sup>36</sup>

It was as if the characters, reluctant to go  
on  
with their parts,  
to play that dumb last scene which would wreck their several  
lots,

were trying to baffle the actors embodying  
them, and made them  
stumble,  
in a sort of jittery slapstick.

---

<sup>36</sup> Lebo (1992: 165 - 168).

## Captain Renault's several roles here

"At the airport, the outline of the transport plane is barely visible.

Orderly: *Hello, radio tower? Lisbon plane taking off in ten minutes. East runway. Visibility: one and a half miles. Light ground fog. Depth of fog: approximately 500. Ceiling: unlimited.*

He hangs up, and crosses to the car that has just pulled up. Renault gets out, closely followed by Rick, hand in pocket, still covering Renault with a gun. Laszlo and Ilsa come from the rear of the car.

Rick [indicating the orderly]. *Louis, have your man go with Mr. Laszlo and take care of his luggage.*

Renault [bows ironically]. *Certainly, Rick. Anything you say.* [to Orderly] *Find Mr. Laszlo's luggage and put it on the plane.*

Orderly. *Yes, sir. This way, please.*

The orderly escorts Laszlo off in the direction of the plane."

Captain Renault does  
here,  
in this particular scene,  
several tasks: true,  
it would have felt cozier,  
having Rick and Ilsa deliver their famous lines,  
lastnightwesaid,  
we'llalwayshaveparis,  
aside,  
but it was okay, even  
convenient,  
to have the gendarme around, listening  
in, looking on,  
nominally filling in the names on the letters of transit, "Mr.  
and Mrs.

Victor Laszlo”,

for in this scene he serves,  
first,  
as procurer,  
staging the exiting of the husband,  
and plays, within-  
the-  
play, both  
us  
the peeping toms  
and jeans  
and the Chorus,  
*well i was right you are a sentimentalist,*

everything is  
(not)  
in order

Laszlo: *Everything is in order?*

Rick: *All except one thing.*

The husband had gone  
off,  
following the orderly, ostensibly  
to leave the luggage on the plane,  
in fact letting the *innamorati* have their sappy little scene; now  
he has come back,  
asks,  
everythingisinorder?

allexceptonething, says  
Rick,  
but he's wrong,  
everything is out-  
of-  
order,  
disjointed,  
for hasn't he told Captain Renault to write "Mr.  
and Mrs.  
Victor Laszlo"'s names  
on the letters of transit?

# the phantom kiss

“...Outside, Laszlo is paying the cabdriver. Ilsa is walking toward the entrance.

Laszlo [to the cabdriver]: *Here.*

Inside, Rick opens the door. Isa rushes in. Her intensity reveals the strain she is under.

Ilsa: *Richard, Victor thinks I'm leaving with him. Haven't you told him?*

Rick: *No, not yet.*

Ilsa: *But it's all right, isn't it? You were able to arrange everything?*

Rick: *Everything is quite all right.*

Ilsa: *Oh, Rick!*

She looks at him with a vaguely questioning look.

Rick: *We'll tell him at the airport. The less time to think, the easier for all of us. Please trust me.*

Ilsa: *Yes, I will.*

Laszlo comes in.”

on July 9, 1942, Producer Hal Wallis wrote a memo to Curtiz,  
he had been seeing the dailies the night before,  
and there was “one thing” he wanted him to shoot,  
hadn’t we talked about it?, Ilsa  
has come into the Café,  
they haven’t got much time left,  
will have to scramble a few lines up while Laszlo pays the  
cabdriver,  
brings  
in  
the luggage,  
all clear?,  
yeah,  
oh Rick, she says, and “at that point”,  
remember?,

this is where I was getting at,  
Rick was “to look at Ilsa a moment and then  
kiss  
her  
so the audience will realize later that this was his goodbye”

but mid-July was crazy on the set, and Humphrey  
objected,  
so “Rick’s kiss never made it into the movie”<sup>37</sup>

why wouldn’t Bogart kiss  
Bergman  
here?

for one thing, they  
would have had to rush it, and check,  
at the same time,  
if Laszlo was coming,  
it would have come up as ungainly,  
clumsy, all  
thumbs; for another,  
he might chicken  
out  
(of his heroic feat); also  
it was part of the tough-guy act he was trying to put on

so instead of that last kiss, we only had words  
(words  
words)  
to gloss over

---

<sup>37</sup> Harmetz (1992: 29 – 30).

## “Round up the usual suspects.”

“Round up the usual suspects.” Thus  
Captain Renault saved your ass. And yet  
weren’t  
we  
the-usual-suspects,  
the adulterous cats on the run, rounded  
up  
at the cul-de-sac of our movie,  
and bagged?  
Wasn’t  
I  
put  
away, sent  
across the ocean, via  
Lisbon,  
to serve a life sentence as the (not so) good wife,  
leaving me to pork  
down  
memory  
lane?  
And didn’t they frame you, force  
you  
to play the free-lance war hero, contented  
in that all-  
male-  
world,  
instead of my undercover cuckmaster?

## Bibliografía

- KOCH, Howard (1992), *Casablanca: Script and Legend*, The Overlook Press, Woodstock / Nueva York.
- HARMETZ, Aljean (1992), *Round Up the Usual Suspects (The Making of Casablanca – Bogart, Bergman, and World War II*, Hyperion, Nueva York.
- LEBO, Howard (1992), *Casablanca: Behind the Scenes*, Simon & Schuster, Nueva Yor, Londres, Toronto, Sydney, Tokio, Singapur.
- MILLER, Frank (1993), *Casablanca, As Time Goes By...50th Anniversary Commemorative*, Virgin Books, Londres.